



120 State Street - Montpelier, VT 05620-2501 – (802) 828-3135 – [www.education.vermont.gov](http://www.education.vermont.gov)

## **Statewide Science Assessment Results Released**

**MONTPELIER** – Statewide science assessment results for spring 2012 show that 53 percent of Vermont fourth graders were assessed and scored as proficient or higher in science, equaling last year's level. While in grade eight, 30 percent were proficient or higher, up one percentage point from 2011. In grade eleven, 33 percent were proficient or higher, up two percentage points from 2011.

The results are from the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) science assessments, which were administered to Vermont public school students in grades four, eight, and eleven last May. This is the fifth year of administration of the NECAP science assessment, which combines scores from multiple choice and short answer questions with results from an inquiry task that requires students to analyze and interpret findings from an actual science experiment.

"As in previous years, many of our students struggled with the writing portion of the inquiry task that requires them to explain the results of their mini-research study, supporting their conclusions with the data they collected," said Michael Hock, Director of Educational Assessment.

"Our new Common Core State Standards emphasize the reading and writing skills students use in science and social studies," said Education Commissioner Armando Vilaseca. "We are hoping this new emphasis on reading and writing in the content areas will have a positive impact on science results in the future."

As seen in previous years, statewide and nationally, an achievement gap persists between students from low-income families and their peers. In grade four, 36 percent of those students were proficient or higher, compared to 65 percent of their peers. In grade eight, 16 percent of those students were proficient or higher, compared to 39 percent of their peers. In grade eleven, 15 percent of those students were proficient or higher, compared to 41 percent of their peers. The achievement gaps at grades four, eight, and eleven have not changed significantly from the 2010 and 2011 results.

"The data paints a clear picture that the achievement gap for children in poverty continues to be a challenge in Vermont and in the entire United States," said

Commissioner Vilaseca. “The Department continues to focus on closing that gap and ensuring that all students who graduate from high school are prepared to continue their education leading them toward meaningful and rewarding careers.”

The NECAP assessments were created in collaboration with Rhode Island and New Hampshire. They are designed to specifically assess how well Vermont students have learned the skills and content contained in the Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities and the Grade Expectations.

School reports are available online:

[http://www.education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_assessment/data.html](http://www.education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_assessment/data.html).

For more information, contact Michael Hock at (802) 828-3115 or Mary Ann Minardo at (802) 828-5410.

###